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Letter dated 4 February 2004 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 26 January 2004, which I received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter could be brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

04-23124 (E) 060204

Annex

Letter dated 26 January 2004 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1088 (1996), I attach the monthly report on the operations of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) for December 2003. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jaap de Hoop **Scheffer**

Enclosure

Monthly report to the United Nations on the operations of the Stabilization Force

1. Over the reporting period (1-31 December 2003) there were just over 11,400 troops deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

Security

2. The overall situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained stable during the period under review.

3. On 2 December, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia sentenced Momir Nikolic to 27 years' imprisonment for his role in the July 1995 Srebrenica massacre. Nikolic, a former intelligence officer in the Bratunac Brigade, was detained by SFOR on 1 April 2002. On 6 May 2003, he pleaded guilty to one count of crimes against humanity, in exchange for which the prosecution dropped four additional charges.

4. On 18 December, the Tribunal sentenced Dragan Nikolic to 23 years' imprisonment for crimes against humanity, including persecutions, murder, rape and torture, committed while serving as the commander of the Susica prison camp in Vlasenica between May and October 1992. On 4 November 1994, Nikolic became the first person to be indicted by the Tribunal and on 20 April 2000, he was detained by SFOR.

Attacks against SFOR and SFOR operational activities

5. There were no significant acts of violence directed against SFOR personnel over the reporting period.

6. SFOR continued to contribute to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to monitor possible terrorist-related threats throughout the country. SFOR remained engaged with Operation Harvest framework operations and exercises. In December, several large weapons caches were discovered during search operations. Joint Harvest Operations with local police and Republika Srpska Army (VRS)/Army of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (VF) have shown some success. One of the outstanding achievements was that in some areas, the local population voluntarily brought weapons, ammunition and other explosives to local police and SFOR. Despite severe winter weather, the pace of Operation Armadillo, designed to support the destruction of current stocks of dangerous, unsafe and unserviceable VRS ammunition, continued successfully. The VRS has made all efforts to transport unstable and redundant ammunition to the demolition sites supported and escorted by SFOR. Overall, December 2003 has been a fruitful month.

7. The results of weapons turned-in/collected from 1 to 31 December within the framework of Operation Harvest are: 1,282 small arms (rifles, pistols and revolvers, etc.); 222,212 rounds of ammunition less than 20 mm; 154 rounds of ammunition between 20 mm and 76 mm; 153 rounds of ammunition more than 76 mm; 6,204 hand grenades; 1,498 mines; 131.5 kilograms of explosives; 3,684 other items (mortars and mortar rounds, rifle grenades, handmade ordnance, attack rockets, etc.).

8. On 1 December, the North Atlantic Council in Defence Ministers session noted that in the light of the significant progress made in Bosnia and Herzegovina, SFOR would reduce by 42 per cent its current force levels by June 2004. Furthermore, on 4 December, NATO Foreign Ministers stated that Allies would assess options for the future size and structure of SFOR, to include possible termination of SFOR by the end of 2004, transition possibly to a new European Union mission within the framework of the "Berlin+" arrangements and to a new NATO headquarters in Sarajevo.

Cooperation and compliance by the parties

9. On 11 December, a draft defence reform law was agreed by the Republika Srpska National Assembly (RSNA) establishing the subordination of the military to the civilian authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This action created the legal basis to integrate the Bosnian Ministry of Defence with the structure of an overall Bosnia and Herzegovina military command, conforming to NATO's Partnership for Peace requirement of establishing a supreme command remaining under civilian control of the Bosnia and Herzegovina tri-presidency. Compromises on uniform insignias, flying unit flags, and data on recruits were important steps in ensuring a draft law was developed.

10. During the reporting period, the Entity Armed Forces have carried out normal training activities, in compliance with the military provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement. In December 2003, there were no reports of missing weapons from weapons storage sites.

11. There were a total of 133 Entity Armed Forces training and operation activities (109 VRS and 24 VF) during the reporting period and 297 movements (180 VRS and 117 VF) conducted during the reporting period. Entity Armed Forces mine-clearing activities.paused during the reporting period and would resume in January 2004. SFOR conducted a total of 65 weapons storage sites and ammunition storage sites inspections during the reporting period (26 VRS and 39 VF). Three weapons storage sites were closed this month and another 11 are pending closure.

Cooperation with international organizations

12. Within capabilities and in accordance with its mandate, SFOR continues to provide assistance to the international organizations working in theatre.

Outlook

13. In December, SFOR continued to maintain a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The success of Operation Armadillo of Operation Harvest and the Defence Reform Law indicate that Bosnia and Herzegovina is making steady progress towards establishing state-level defence structures, as well as Euro-Atlantic and European integration.